

CLAIMS

What is claimed as new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent of the United States is:

1. A suture shuttle comprising:

a strand of flexible metallic material having two ends and formed into an elongated loop; and

a closure for holding the two ends of the strand together.

2. The suture shuttle of claim 1, wherein said flexible metallic material comprises nitinol.
3. The suture shuttle of claim 1, wherein said closure comprises a shrink sleeve.
4. The suture shuttle of claim 1, further comprising a radius formed at the one of said ends opposite said closure.
5. The suture shuttle of claim 4, wherein said radius is formed by crimping said flexible material at said one of said ends opposite said closure.
6. The suture shuttle of claim 1, having sufficient length to extend into a portal and out an accessory portal through a joint undergoing arthroscopic surgery.
7. The suture shuttle of claim 6, having a length of about 22 inches.
8. A suture shuttle comprising a length of nitinol wire having two ends, the two ends being secured together to form a loop, and an acute bend formed in the loop on a side opposite to the two ends.

9. A method of securing tissue to bone using a length of suture, the method comprising the steps of:
 - installing a suture anchor with an attached suture strand in a portion of bone adjacent a section of tissue to be secured;
 - piercing said tissue with a distal end of a suture passer;
 - deploying a loop formed of flexible metal wire from the distal end of said suture passer;
 - capturing said suture strand with said loop; and
 - passing said captured suture strand through said tissue by retracting the loop through the tissue.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising the steps of:
 - retrieving and passing said suture strand through an accessory portal;
 - retrieving and passing said loop through the accessory portal,; and
 - capturing said suture strand with said loop outside of the accessory portal.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein said suture stand is captured in said loop by threading said suture strand through a radius of said loop.

12. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of retracting said suture passer through said portal, leaving said flexible loop passing through said tissue.

13. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of forming a knot between said suture strand and a second suture stand also attached to said suture anchor.